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THE EAST TIMOR PEOPLE'S STRUGGLE FOR NATIONAL LIBERATION -- RESISTANCE, REVOLUTION AND LIBERATION

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INTRODUCTION

While much has been written on East Timor up to December 7,1975, little if anything has been written on the struggle that has occurred since then. With the exception of reports on the Indonesian atrocities in the past three years, there has been no consistent attempt made to really analyse the struggle of the Maubere people over the past three years -- surely a struggle that must enter into the annals of the history of the past decades ,as one of the most tenacious and difficult we have yet seen in the Colonial Revolution.

As a result, much that has been written by journalists and others since December 1975 , has been through the prism of what they saw before the invasion. This includes their analysis of individuals and political forces at play. Yet, just as it would be impossible to analyse what occurred between April 1974 and December 1975 in East Timor, through the prism of journalistic observation before April 74, so it is really impossible to really understand the current situation in East Timor without analysing as deeply as possible the evolution since the fullscale Indonesian invasion.

There are of course major difficulties in doing that. East Timor has been blockaded by Suharto's forces since December 1975. No independent observer has entered the country and the few journalists have only been allowed to go on a guided tour with one exception lasting only 24 or 48 hours. Naturally, those who have gone on these guided tours have produced virtually nothing of value in terms of independent observation.

That leaves three sources : the most valuable is the result of three years of two-way and one-way radio contact with Fretilin. The second most valuable comes from reports of refugees who left the country after the invasion, and from letters smuggled out from Dili to the outside world. But these sources are usually both anti-Fretilin and anti-Indonesian, while also having limited access to events in the mountains. The third source is Indonesian propaganda -- itself usually so blatant and self-contradictory that is must be totally discarded. But , as with any propaganda, the internal contradictions it contains are themselves useful in getting a view of what is really happening.

THE INTERNATIONAL CONTEXT

The East Timorese Revolution cannot be understood unless it is placed in an international context. That context includes both the global context -- the contradictions between imperialism and those countries which have abolished capitalism, and the contradictions among the countries which have abolished capitalism -- and the specific regional context in which East Timor exists and the specific ideological-political influences which affected it as a Portuguese colony.

In the global context , East Timor's political awakening occurred in the final death agony of imperialism in Vietnam,Kampuchea and Laos. American imperialism was both seriously weakened by its humiliating defeat, but equally determined to crush any sign of rebellion . For some time it had been sponsoring its agent-regimes as "strong men" able to intervene ,now that it was politically impossible to send in the marines and B-52s any more. In west Asia and the Middle East there were Iran and Israel. In South East Asia, Indonesia was the logical choice as gendarme.

It was in this context that Suharto was encouraged to invade East Timor. In the literature dealing with American imperialism's role in East Timor, there has been a passive noting that Ford and Kissinger were in Jakarta a few days before the invasion, and that America has been the major supplier of military hardware for the Indonesian aggression. Generally, there has been a "journalistic" failure to draw the conclusion that is clear : the invasion of East Timor was an act of aggression inspired and totally supported by American imperialism, which fitted into its post-Vietnam strategy of using its puppets to crush liberation movements wherever they may develop; of Asians fighting Asians -- with the oppressors armed with American military hardware.

The Fretilin Central Committee has always been very clear in identifying imperialism and above all American imperialism as the main enemy, with Suharto's regime as its willing and bloodthirsty puppet. It is time that this conclusion was clearly spelt out in the solidarity movement as well , and an end made to attempts to put a gloss on this easily established fact. American imperialism's support for Suharto was no mistake, anymore than Carter's support for the bloody-handed Shah is or was a "mistake". Both fit within imperialism's strategy and are not due to the decision of one group of "badies" in the State Department or Pentagon going against the "humanitarian" policies of Carter...

The East Timorese Revolution has also been the victim of the contradictions which have reached explosion point between China and the Soviet Union ; between Vietnam and Kampuchea in South East Asia. I do not intend to go here into the rights and wrongs of these contradictions, or say which country has been more guilty.

It is sufficient to note that the dictators of South East Asia -- Suharto, Marcos, the Thai Generals, Lee and Onn -- who were shaking in their shoes after imperialism's defeat in Vietnam and Kampuchea , have been the real winners from the explosive contradictions existing between the Soviet Union and China, and between Vietnam and Kampuchea and the interplay of these contradictions. All parties concerned have launched a great competition to woo these dictatorships, and the Suhartos and others have been able to exploit these contradictions.

After the defeat of imperialism in Indochina, the East Timorese people had the right to expect the fullest possible support from all the countries who were anti-imperialism. True, all the nations concerned have voted with East Timor in the United Nations and to different degrees given moral, diplomatic and political support. But too often this has been dictated in its degree by the diplomatic considerations in South East Asia vis a vis the attitude Suharto has taken to the Sino-Soviet-Vietnam-Kampuchean contradictions.

Similarly, the East Timorese people should have been able to expect solidarity and support from the Portuguese Government(s) following the overthrow of fascism in April 1974. But, despite the "decolonisation" declarations of the successive governments since April 1974, the East Timorese people have been betrayed at each step by regimes who showed no interest in East Timor except to disengage as quickly as possible and even acquiesce in the Indonesian takeover (despite diplomatic protests). Sadly, this applied even to the most leftist of those governments, for whom the plea of over-involvement in Africa and at home is no excuse.

In Australia, the East Timorese people could equally have expected support from the first Labor Government in 23 years. But , on the contrary, they were shamefully betrayed by Whitlam in particular. There is no need to repeat the disgusting story of this betrayal -- it is well documented now. It must also be said that the Australian Left has no excuse in pleading the crisis that developed here in 1975, for its lack of stronger action in those days.

It was only in the former Portuguese colonies in Africa that the East Timorese people found their true friends and comrades-in-arms. But in Mozambique, Angola Guine-Bissau and so on , the final stage of the revolution was only being achieved ,and their possibilities for action were severely limited. It was only after the invasion that these comrades-in-arms could more fully mobilise their still limited resources.

Of course, there were in Fretilin's diplomacy in the period of April 1974 to December 1975, many deficiencies. In the main , this was due to the speed with which the situation developed. It was only 16 months after the formation of ASDT-Fretilin that the UDT staged its coup and 17 months after the start that Fretilin was in full control of the country. That is a very, very short time to develop an international diplomacy able to meet the needs of the invasion to come.

But there were other factors : the influence of the conservative wing of Fretilin was dominant in this diplomacy and was centred on the need to win Australia to a position of support for East Timor's right to independence. When it became clear -- very early -- that Whitlam had sold out to Suharto, this conservative diplomatic line turned to the Liberal-Country Party Opposition as its mainstay, and particularly upon that hypocritical little man, Andrew peacock. Peacock's advice was ,naturally, to trust him, and to not turn to the natural allies of the East Timorese people, and, above all, to reassure Suharto with promises for instance to follow ASEAN foreign policy.

The hypocritical reassurances of Peacock led to illusions that Indonesia would not openly invade ,but would continue the border war for some time . Valuable time was lost , and that despite the initiatives of Nicolau Lobato in visiting Mozambique and Portugal, in an attempt to widen the diplomatic front. This did not negate what we said earlier : it was the conservative wing of Fretilin that determined the main line of foreign policy and diplomatic efforts towards (of all people) Andrew Peacock, and the continuing efforts of this conservative wing to dovetail Fretilin's foreign policy with Australia -- and Indonesia. In other words, the conservatives' control of Fretilin diplomatic efforts was used in an effort to foist on Fretilin a neo-colonial solution -- an effort that in turn negated the mass line and revolutionary policy Fretilin was adopting internally. It was only after the invasion that Fretilin's diplomatic orientation turned to its natural allies -- after the most favourable period (Fretilin's control of the whole country) had changed.

To sum up : what seemed to be a highly favourable international context in 1974-1975, turned out to be an illusion. The East Timorese people have had to fight on their own resources, with solidarity greatly limited on all fronts. Essentially, the disappointments with the international context were not of Fretilin's making, despite mistakes made before and since. There is no doubt that the failure of the superficially favourable international context to provide the support initially hoped for , was, initially, at least, a blow to the East Timorese people. But it is a blow they have survived and as early as March 1976, the Supreme Council of Struggle adopted a policy of total self-reliance, of counting on their own resources. This is a slogan often voiced by liberation movements and of course in all cases has a basis of truth : no nation has ever won its liberation from outside alone and not through its own efforts. But never -- to my knowledge -- has a movement and a whole people had to apply the slogan of self-reliance so totally as have the East Timorese people. Of course, their astonishing success in the past three years and their continuing success despite all the difficulties will bring the possibilities of them not having to be so totally self-reliant closer in the future...

In such a situation, of total self-reliance, the different lines among the Fretilin Central Committee which in the pre-invasion period were contained within a certain division of labour and a democratic process of decision-making which led to a united front, became clear and antagonistic in the post-invasion period.

THE TWO LINES WITHIN FRETILIN

Despite the clearly stated policy for total independence, there existed inside Fretilin leadership from the beginning a minority, conservative wing which never really believed that the Maubere people could win total independence from imperialism and Suharto's fascist-military clique. For this group , the strategy was always to attempt to win Fretilin to acceptance of East Timorese "independence" being that of a "client State", whose independence would be as real as that of Bhutan from India.

The aim of making East Timor a "client State" was also that of a strong wing of Australian mini-imperialism, represented by the Defence Department and JIO. The clearest exponent of this line was Peter Hastings (who has unashamedly admitted in the Sydney Morning Herald of January 1,1979 that he held this as the best alternative). A "client State" is in fact the most extreme form of neo-colonialism which denies the "client" even the semblance of independence in anything but name. From the earliest days of ASDT, the conservative wing of that organisation proposed concessions to Indonesia in the form of economic and foreign policy which added up to an acceptance of a "client State" status. Later this was broadened to try to entice Australia to join Indonesia as the masters of this puppet "independent" State.

On the other hand, the revolutionary majority of Fretilin Central Committee after the transformation of ASDT into Fretilin, had the front adopt a clear-cut policy opposing neo-colonialism and of struggling for total independence. This line was confirmed in the May 1976 meeting of the Supreme Council of Struggle and has been reiterated at all such meetings since.

It is in that sense that we must understand the rejection of "negotiations" by the Fretilin Central Committee. Let us state quite clearly that those in the conservative minority of Fretilin CC have all understood "negotiations" as meaning a "compromise" in which East Timor would accept a "client State" status. This was so for the Xavier do Amaral group and was even more clearly so for Alarico Fernandes and his group. The debate about "negotiations" inside Fretilin throughout the past three years has revolved not around the use of "negotiations" for diplomatic purposes ,to divide the enemy and put them diplomatically on the defence,while refusing to "compromise" on the demand for total independence. This ,of course, is the way "negotiations" were carried out by the liberation movements in the former Portuguese colonies and by the Vietnamese.

But in East Timor, the debate on "negotiations" was really a debate on whether Fretilin accept a "compromise" and a "client State" status, or whether they fight on to final victory. Both sides -- the conservative and revolutionary wings -- both understood the debate in those terms.The slogan "negotiations never" meant for both sides a rejection of neo-colonial solutions : and that is why Xavier and then Fernandes staged their attempted coups -- to prepare the way for a neo-colonial solution.

In the outside world, and in the solidarity movements, the clear position of Fretilin CC on "negotiations" has been misunderstood. Some have attempted to present the CC position as "ultra-left" . They have attempted to present the

question as an abstract, "theoretical" one, while ignoring the very real struggle inside Fretilin and how the question of "negotiations" was interpreted by both sides. As in any such debate ,which reaches explosive points, the debate is never an abstract or "theoretical" one, but deeply reflects the basic questions posed for the Revolution : to surrender or to fight for final victory.

In the solidarity movements, we must also ask those who have taken the side of "negotiations" in the debate within Fretilin : are you supporting "negotiations" because you believe that the East Timorese people cannot win total independence, and that a "client State" status is all that can be won ,short of total integration in Suharto's empire ? Do you support "negotiations" and a "compromise"(neo-colonial) solution for "humanitarian reasons" ,to stop the genocide Suharto has unleashed against the East Timorese people ?

I believe that,in fact, these are the reasons many have supported a "compromise" solution. Many people oppose Suharto's invasion for humanitarian reasons , and that is natural and in part at least correct. The same happened of course in the big movement in Australia and around the world in opposition to American aggression in Vietnam and Kampuchea. With Vietnam, the desire the stop the genocide was a deep and correct feeling among the masses around the world who opposed the American war. But what was the answer ? Was it to demand that the Viethamese people surrender or accept to be a "client State" of American imperialism ? Or was it to respect (and support) the right of the Vietnamese people to fight for their independence, despite the terrible cost inflicted on them by American imperialism, and to demand instead that American and Australian troops withdraw from Vietnam and end their "Vietnamisation" of the war ? To my knowledge no one raised the demand that the Vietnamese people stop fighting and accept a neo-colonial solution -- no one ,that is, except the Pentagon and the Thieu regime.

The Vietnamese, Kampuchean and Laotian people ,like the Mozambican,Angolan and Guinean people paid a terrible price ,in terms of human lives and physical and ecological destruction, for their independence. Similarly, imperialism and the Suharto military-fascist regime is imposing a terribly high cost on the East Timorese people for their independence. Who has the right to tell the East Timorese people not to fight ?

In fact, the enemies of the East Timorese people interpret every sign of a desire for a "compromise", neo-colonial solution, as a sign of weakness, including when it comes from the supporters of the East Timorese people. The surrender of Xavier do Amaral and Alarico Fernandes in fact prolong the war, because they boost the morale of the Indonesian troops, who begin again to believe that the "end of the tunnel" is in sight, and the resistance will collapse. The Maubere people will pay with thousands more dead for their betrayal.

Yet those who support the right of the East Timorese people to fight for total independence are sometimes accused of wanting to fight to the last Timorese, and of being fanatical. Let us be very clear : the Maubere people themselves have decided that they will fight for "independence or death" -- their decision was not and is not made in Sydney or anywhere else. The Maubere people have accepted the terrible cost they are being forced to pay, rather than live in slavery under Suharto. They are not the first people to have made such a decision, and they will not be the last. Objectively, not to support their decision is to increase the suffering and the cost in lives they will have to pay. To support the traitors who want a neo-colonial solution inside Fretilin , is in fact to prolong the war. As for being "fanatical" : if to do everything possible to support the East Timorese people, to support their rejection of neo-colonialism or surrender , is fanatical, then so be it. Indded, it seems to me that the "fanaticism" often comes from the other side of the debate...

to be"fanatical"is to be irrational,to not study a question deeply,and to blindly follow an "ideological" position,without consideration of the human aspects involved. It is my belief,that the revolutionary position is,in this case,the really "humanitarian" position ; it is the rational position.

I shall deal with the question of whether the East Timorese people can win their struggle for total independence later in this paper when I considerx the perspectives of the Maubere Revolution.

THE STRUGGLE IN THE LIBERATED AREAS

As I have stated,there have been two fundamentally opposed lines within Fretilin Central Committee,and these two lines have increasingly over the past three years come into conflict over the question of whether to fight for final and total victory, or to accept a neo-colonial solution. In the two major explosions of the contradictions between these two lines,the revolutionary line has on both times been victorious ,and the "conservative win" leaders (Xavier do Amaral and Alarico Fernandes) have been forced to recognise the reality of their line's logic : to total surrender.

To understand the evolution of this internal struggle in the liberated areas,it is necessary to look at the main outlines of the revolutionary resistance offered by the East Timorese people in the past three years.

In some respects, the East Timorese people were in a stronger position at the beginning of the invasion, than liberation movements in other countries have been when they began guerrilla wars. First,Fretilin had total control of the whole country. It had captured (captured--not surrendered by the Portuguese) the substantial arsenal of the Portuguese colonial army. They had at least a skeleton administrative structure operating Thus the invaders were entering a terrain they did not know ,and the positions were reversed.when compared, for example,with Mozambique,where the Portuguese fascists were "in place" ,and FRELIMO had to begin the reconquest of their country from small bases.

Of course, the overwhelming military superiority of the Indonesian invaders enabled them to capture Dili,Baucau and some of the other main administrative centres (which however had a low population) within a relatively short period -- by mid-1976,they had captured a dozen such small towns .However, Fretilin not only maintained near total control of the countryside where 90% of the population lived, but also threw cordons around the isolated Indonesian outposts,and on many occasions forced the Indonesians to pull out. The first six months were crucial :Fretilin and Falintil were able to organise a stable resistance and stabilised liberated areas which in fact took over 80% of the country. Falintil established its "front lines" surrounding the Indonesian outposts and protecting these liberated areas, where life was able to proceed with some normality and the revolutionary organisation of the masses for production, self-defence and education and health was able to develop with the necessary speed.

At the end of 1976 and the beginning of 1977,Suharto's forces launched a number of desperate and large-scale offensives,which aimed at destroying key liberated areas. But Fretilin, with amazin success ,defeated these offensives.As a result,form approximately March to September 1977 Suharto's forces were forced to abstain from any large-scale attacks,and were content with small scale raids which met fierce resistance. At the same time, they stepped up air raids on the liberated areas,with the strategy of destroying food crops,massacring the civilian population and destabilising the liberated areas. Yet it can be said that until September 1977,the Indonesians had suffered a major and demoralising defeat : they were unable to end theirt isolation in a dozen small towns,or break Fretilin control of the vast liberated areas and the vast majority of the population.

It is convenient therefore to divide the struggle and resistance in East Timor into the two periods of December 1975 to September 1977 , and of September 1977 to the present. September 1977 is a turning point in a number of respects : it marks the arrest of Xavier do Amaral by Fretilin and the defeat of his attempted coup, and secondly, marks the beginning of Suharto's new offensives which are described by Fretilin as "campaigns of encirclement and annihilation" .These campaigns aimed at encirclement of liberated areas and the systematic destruction of crops and of the civilian population.

But first let us look at developments in the liberated areas from December 1975 to September 1977. Alarico Fernandes failed over a period of three years to give anything but the most general outline of the situation in the liberated areas.However, the best source is the speech of President Nicolau Lobato on September 14 1977 after the arrest of Xavier do Amaral. This speech is an excellent source because a picture emerges of the life in the liberated areas incidental to the main theme of the speech.

First, it should be noted that security was strong within the liberated zones. For example, the meeting of the top Fretilin leadership --The Supreme Council of Struggle and the Political Committee took place in Soibada from May 20 to June 2 1976. The same bodies held a joint meeting in Lalini from March 8 to May 20 1977 -- in other words, major leaders of Fretilin were able to meet for nearly three months in full security, to discuss the development of the struggle. (Another major meeting of these two bodies occurred in October 1977 ,which elected President Nicolau Lobato and Vice-President Mau-Lear to head Fretilin. Details of the length and place of this meeting has not yet been released).

Second, movement around the country,from one liberated area to another, was safe and relatively easy. Xavier do Amaral was condemned for his "visits to festivities with big noise and big banquets; long voyages in cavalcade with the noise of numerous guards and opportunists and hangers-on,authentic parasites who lived off the people everywhere ; big colonial style dances ,lasting all night and sometimes all week..." While President Nicolau Lobato was of course absolutely correct in condemning this feudal-colonial style of living,the fact that Xavier do Amaral was able , as a person not noted for his courage, to act in this way, shows the degree of security in this period, in the liberated areas.

Third, production was well organised in this period. Seed grains were distributed throughout the country from a central point and according to an organised plan. Xavier do Amaral was accused of seizing seed grain being sent to other sectors and of boycotting plans to mobilise the population for production as decided by the Permanent Committee of Fretilin CC in September 1976 . Fernandes in May 1977 reported that the harvest over the previous year had exceeded any previous harvest in the colonial history of East Timor. Production was organised through co-operatives and the collective labour of the whole population in the liberated areas.

Fourth, Fretilin organised the "political,military and technical organisation, modernisation and training of Falintil" in this period, to better prepare it to defend and extend the liberated areas. Front lines were organised around the Indonesian garrisoned small towns, and anyone crossing these lines had to produce authorisation from Fretilin. Falintil was shaped into a regular army ,with special units or "shock brigades" .

Fifth, Fretilin campaigned against the remnants of feudalism and obscurantism in the liberated areas -- the lulics, arranged marriages, lurais, tribalism and regionalism , feudal servitude -- and the colonial practices of subservience to "big men" and so on.

Sixth, organisational work included efforts to replace supplies cut off by the blockade and invasion : sugar was grown and processed -- it was on display at the May 1976 meeting. Traditional medicines were developed and researched to replace medical supplies cut off from the liberated areas. Gunpowder and mines were produced from raw materials in the liberated areas. Education continued using the most basic materials. Printing facilities were developed, including for leaflets and booklets in Bahasa Indonesia for circulation among Indonesian troops.

In short, despite the boycott on information about the organisation of life in the liberated areas, imposed by Alarico Fernandes particularly from mid-1977, a picture emerges from documented material available, of a stable, organised life in the liberated areas, only marginally disturbed by the massive Indonesian military offensives launched in this period.

In September 1977, the Indonesian military began to adopt a new tactic : it concentrated its forces in a small area and began an intensive campaign of "encirclement and annihilation", accompanied with intensive air, land and sea bombardment, aimed at surrounding liberated areas , capturing the civilian population, destroying food crops and stores, and destabilising Fretilin and Falintil organisation in these areas. Helicopters carried troops and heavy artillery on to strategically placed mountain tops, to continuously shell the liberated areas in which they were situated and to "soften up" Falintil for massive infantry and armoured attack.

The first attacks, in early September 1977 were timed to coincide with the planned coup by Xavier do Amaral , which was prevented by his arrest. The first attacks were concentrated in the south border and north border areas. The next offensives occurred in the Centre-North Sector in June 1978 and soon after in the Centre-South and Centre-East Sectors.

On May 20, 1978, President Nicolau Lobato described how the campaigns of encirclement and annihilation in the border sectors were near collapse because of the fierce resistance of hundreds of thousands of Mauberes. Just before exposing his betrayal, and while still in radio contact with Falintil headquarters, Fernandes reported on September27 that the Indonesians had been forced to withdraw to a few strategic places in the north border sector. The latest news, from a letter smuggled out of Dili, reports fierce fighting recently in the Railaco area, in this north border sector.

What, then, is the situation in East Timor now ? It is a fact that the campaigns of encirclement and annihilation have only had success in the Centre-North Sector. This is not accidental. The Centre-North Sector (the area south and east of Dili) was the "feudal fief" of Xavier do Amaral ; it was also the scene of Alarico Fernandes' planned counter-revolutionary coup called by him "Operation Skylight". First under Xavier do Amaral and then under Alarico Fernandes this Centre-North Sector has been the scene of all plots hatched against the revolutionary majority of Fretilin CC. It was in this area, and part of the Centre-South Sector that Xavier do Amaral boycotted organisation and production, set up his own feudal-type administration, encouraged obscurantism and regionalism and generally disorganised life so much that it was even then particularly vulnerable to Indonesian attack. There is no reason to believe this changed much under Alarico Fernandes, who himself in the secret Saturno messages admitted his organisation for "Operation Skylight" began in October 1977 -- that is, almost immediately after Xavier's arrest.

We must fear then that the situation described by President Nicolau Lobato, as existing in September 1977, had not changed much in the Centre-North Sector by June 1978. The Maubere Revolution, that had swept the remainder of the country and provided the social and political basis for the defeat of the Indonesian offensives

in the two border sectors, and which have also been severely checked or even maybe by now defeated in the Centre-South and Centre-East sectors.

The "victories" won by the Indonesians have all occurred in this Centre-North Sector : it was from here that Alarico Fernandes released Xavier do Amaral, as the advance-guard to contact the Indonesians for "Operation Skylight" ; it was from this Sector that Alarico Fernandes himself surrendered. And if Indonesian reports are correct (and we strongly doubt them -- see note at end of this paper), it was in this sector that Nicolau Lobato was reportedly killed,when he was maybe attempting to reorganise the resistance after the betrayal of Fernandes. Similarly, the many people who have left the mountains and who were before part of the educated elite who supported Fretilin, have come from this Centre-North Sector in their vast majority.

It is clear then that the situation in the Centre-North Sector has deteriorated badly and that it is here, and here alone that the Suharto regime has won its first substantial "victory" since the beginning of the invasion. The "victory" in this sector is not a defeat for the revolutionary line of Fretilin, but rather is an indication that its revolutionary line is an absolute necessity for final victory. It shows that the line of the revolutionary majority of Fretilin CC led by President Nicolau Lobato, Vice-President Mau-Lear and National Political Commissioner Sa'he is the guaranteee for victory.

No doubt the resistance will be reconstructed in the Centre-North Sector.No doubt also the Indonesians will have their morale boosted by this victory,which we believe will only prove temporary,although it could have the result of increased military pressure on the Centre-South Sector, where Xavier do Amaral also infected some parts with his feudal and tribalist approach,and where Alarico Fernandes boasted he had sent some of his agents before his surrender. But such defeats and retreats must be expected in a protracted people's war -- indeed, it is a sign of the strength of the resistance of the Maubere people and of their Revolution ,that it is only now ,after three years of war, that the Suharto military have achieved such a "success." But it is a "success" built on clay -- a win gained through the political weakness and disorganisation in the Centre-North Sector, and the betrayal of Xavier do Amaral and Alarico Fernandes.

We can expect Suharto's propaganda machine to make much of this very limited "victory". Affer all, they have been starved of real success in the past , and have been forced to manufacture "victories" and declare repeatedly that Fretilin has been defeated over the past two years. Moreover, the morale of Suharto's troops in East Timor is very low and weariness with the war growing. We can expect fabrications built on the very real difficulties in the Centre-North Sector. The Australian and world capitalist media will print all the Suharto propaganda as gospel truth.

The solidarity movement must "keep its head", avoid the pressure to demoralisation , and remain confident that the struggle continues and that Suharto will finally be forced to withdraw from East Timor. We have the weapon of a concrete, realistic political analysis,towards which ,I hope, this paper will be a contribution. Anyone who thinks that revolutionary war proceeds in a straight line to victory without reverses,partial defeats, betrayals and then resurgence, deepening of the revolution and new victories, is living in a dream world.

Revolutionary war,particularly one as difficult as that in East Timor, is a contradictory and complex phenomenon. Above all, revolutionary war depends on a real, deep Revolution taking place among the broad masses,so that every man and woman becomes a soldier and militant of the revolutionary war, constantly deepening his or her political understanding, and throwing up cadres and leaders

from among the Maubere people themselves, able to carry the struggle forward.

That said, I wish to conclude by examining the perspectives of the Maubere Revolution and the possibilities by which Suharto's military-fascist forces can be forced to accept their defeat and withdraw from East Timor.

PERSPECTIVES FOR THE REVOLUTION

I want to first make some comments about the "Revolution" and its perspectives before going on to the more general question of how victory will be won.

As was noted in EAST TIMOR NEWS No. 47 and 48, there has been a profound revolutionary process going on in the liberated areas of East Timor. It began in one sense from the founding of ASDT , then took a leap forward with the transformation of the ASDT into FRETILIN in September 1974 and the adoption of its political programme. Next came the attempted UDT coup in August 1975 and the successful Fretilin counter-offensive, which brought Fretilin into power throughout the country from September 1975 to December 1975, during which period Fretilin had to cope not only with the border incursions by Suharto's troops, but also the complex problems of social, political and economic organisation, which brought forward the embryonic forms which developed after the invasion. The invasion in December 1975 resulted in the first wave of betrayals -- the weakest and most corrupt surrendered very soon after the invasion.

The May 1976 meeting of the Supreme Council of Struggle and the Fretilin Political Committee was a decisive meeting, which reaffirmed the determination to continue the struggle to final victory, to reject a "compromise solution" , and to ppoceed with the organisation of the liberated areas for a long, protracted revolutionary people's war. The next meeting from March to May 1977 reaffirmed and deepened these decisions. In October 1977, a second major turning point occurred with the defeat of the Xavier coup attempt and the election of President Nicolau Lobato, Vice-President Mau-Lear and National Political Commissioner Sa'he to head the struggle. The following year saw the further deepening of the revolutionary process in the liberated areas . The question of transofrming Fretilin from a movement into a revolutionary party also took shape and it was within this framework of the deepening of the revolution that Alarico Fernandes prepared his coup in the form of "Operation Skylight".

Throughout the past four years, the Maubere people have been fighting not only a war of resistance but also to deepen their Revolution, against the internal reactionaries in the liberated areas. That very clearly shows the dual nature of the struggle of the Maubere people -- to defeat the Indonesian fascist aggressors, and to develop their own revolution, in which the exploitation of man by man will be defeated . But these two aspects of the struggle are not independent, but are interwined. Without the victory of theRevolution in the liberated areas, the aggressors will not be defeated. And of course, without the defeat of the aggressors, the Revolution cannot achieve its full flower. In fact, that is the sense of what we have outlined in the last half of this paper .

There are a number of ways in which we can foresee the final victory of the Maubere people occurring. The Indonesians could be totally defeated militarily as the puppet troops were in Vietnam and Kampuchea. However, Fretilin would have to have heavy and more sophisticated weapons than they do at present , to achieve such a goal. Alternatively, the process could be more like what happened in Mozambique , Angola and Guine-Bissau : Indonesian soldiers and lower-ranking officers could refuse to fight any more in a war which they cannot win in East Timor, and demand to return home, and if that is refused, finally overthrow themselves, or join the masses in overthrowing the Suharto dictatorship. In other words, Suharto

could go the same way as Caetano did, and after some attempts by a new regime to salvage a "compromise solution", the unconditional withdrawal of the Indonesian troops from East Timor would be won.

Given the "international context" outlined in the first part of this paper, it is my belief that the second alternative is the more likely one. The Suharto regime ,while seemingly having overcome the agitation that occurred early last year, is nevertheless unstable. The worsening economic situation, following the recent 50% devaluation,is an explosive ingredient in the crisis. Previously cautious observers are now tipping Suharto will not last 1979.

Of course, it is not excluded at all, that the CIA will favour a "preventive coup" by another group of Generals who can present themselves as "cleanskins". If that type of coup occurred, there would be no guarantee that the new group of Generals would retreat from East Timor. They would have two alternatives : blame Suharto for invading in the first place contrary to the Indonesian Constitution and seek a "compromise solution" with East Timor as a "client State", or blame Suharto for the mismanagement of the war and promise the soldiers that they will manage it successfully to final victory.

It is for this reason that Suharto and his clique were so jubilant at the claimed murder of Nicolau Lobato. It was to boost morale, to claim a "victory" that Defence Minister General Yusuf flew to Dili to decorate the soldiers who carried out the alleged killing, and to bring back Nicolau Lobato's alleged rifle to the Jakarta Military Museum ! It was because the war in East Timor is a thorn in Suharto's flesh that a special nationwide TV broadcast was made immediately the alleged death og Suharto became known in Indonesia.

But Suharto's jubilation will be short-lived. He will learn very soon that the struggle continues .The cannon-fodder in his army will learn that many more thousands of them will have to die in East Timor.

The convergence of the continuing revolutionary war in East Timor, with the upsurge of the mass struggle in Indonesia itself will result in the overthrow of Suharto. The longer time passes before Suharto is removed, the more likely it is that the next regime in Indonesia will be a progressive one, and the order given to withdraw the troops from East Timor. That is why the Americans are preparing a "preventive coup." After all, they have learnt something from Iran. They don't want the streets of Jakarta to be like those in Tehran.

There is no basis for defeatism and demoralisation when we examine the East Timorese Revolution.

Victory is certain and only a matter of time !

The above paper was completed on January 5,1979.

It will be presented at the Marxist Summer School in Sydney on January 13 1979 and at th National Conference :"East Timor, Australia and the Region" in Adelaide on January 27 1979. Additions ,updating the material in the above paper, will be added if necessary for these two conferences.

--DENIS FRENEY, Sydney,Australia 5/1/79